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ABSTRACT

Following a description of the rapid transformation of the Finnish society from an agricultural to a post-industrial one, this study reports results from a secondary analysis of a representative survey collected in 1981 by the Central Statistical Office of Finland. Using a sample of 744 urban residents, the 'working age' period of 25-66 years was divided into five successive age groups, birth cohorts who have experienced the same historical changes at different ages. These five cohorts (postwar recovery, postwar baby boom, wartime recovery, wartime childhood, and wartime youth) were compared on the basis of life course experiences and current intergenerational contacts. Findings show that despite many supposedly interfering factors and despite infrequent intergenerational sharing of a household, regular meetings with parents, grandparents, and adult children continued to form an essential part of the social network for a large majority of all groups and in both gender groups of adults. Certain differences according to stage of family life, gender, and age were noted but differences were usually not significant. The study concludes that more qualitative methods are needed to study content, meaning, and function as instruments of mutual socialization as well as the emotional climate of the intergenerational contacts of adults. (LH)

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RESEARCH REPORT 21

Department of Teacher Education
University of Helsinki

Anna-Liisa Sysiharju

INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACTS AND URBAN FAMILY LIFE

among women and men of different ages in a rapidly changing society

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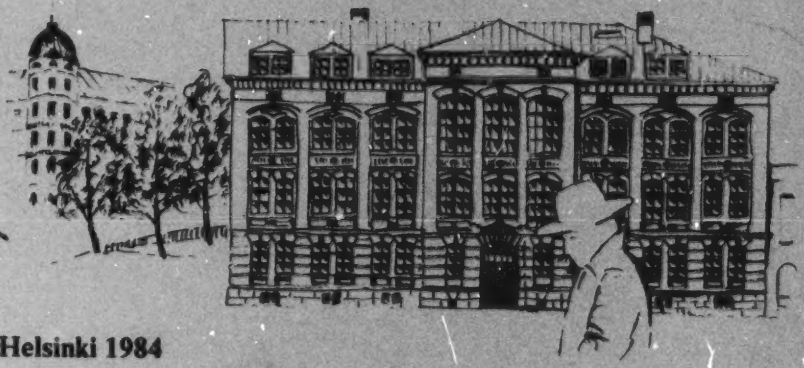

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Abstract

This study forms one of the first steps in a larger research project under the working name "Development as a Family Member - Role of Home and Family Traditions". In studying simultaneously individuals and families, this project uses a developmental approach to the whole course of the life and directs specific attention to the role of traditions and customs in the home.

These questions touch, among others, upon the existence and significance of continued contacts during adulthood between the successive generations in families. Since the Finnish society has undergone rapid industrialization and urbanization, a large part of the urban population consists of former rural residents, and also, a majority of urban married women and mothers are gainfully employed. Consequently the question has been raised to what extent the ties between the successive generations of the families have weakened or broken due to occupational and geographical mobility.

To give a quantitative answer to that question, this study - after describing the societal background - reports results from a secondary analysis that was carried out in a representative survey (sample 744 urban residents) collected in 1981 by interviewers of the Central Statistical Office of Finland. In this analysis the long 'working age' period of 25 to 66 years was divided into five successive age groups, i.e., into birth cohorts that have experienced the same historical changes at different ages. In the study, these five cohorts were compared on the basis of both certain life course experiences and current intergenerational contacts both upwards and downwards in the lineage.

It was concluded in the study that despite many supposedly interferring factors and despite infrequent intergenerational sharing of a household a regular meeting with parents, grandparents and adult children continued to form an essential part of the social network for a large majority in all age groups and in both gender groups of urban adults. Certain differences according to stage of family life, gender and age can be noted, but they are usually not large. The content and meaning of intergenerational contacts in different ages will in the main research project be studied by interview methods of a more qualitative type.

Keywords: intergenerational contacts, family life, life span, sex differences, Finnish society, social change

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PREFACE

This paper was originally written to supplement a poster presented at the "Seventh Biennal Meeting of the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development" 31.7.-4.8.1983 in Munich, FRG. The paper is an interim comment on the larger project in progress "Development as a Family Kember". A more detailed and manifold analysis of the data material reported here will shortly be published in Finnish. Although larger publications in English are under preparation, a need was felt to make even this short report known to a wider audience.

Anna-Liisa Sysiharju

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1. BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THIS STUDY

The study here reported forms one of the first steps in a larger research project, under the working name "Development as a Family Member - Role of Home and Family Traditions". In studying simultaneously individuals and families, this project uses a developmental approach to the whole course of life and directs specific attention to the role of traditions and customs in the home, their significance, change and continuation during the life-long development of individuals as members of families.

As this development is understood as a continuing reciprocal interaction between a changing person and her/his changing environment - including other persons themselves developing (Bengtson & Black 1973, Lerner & Spanier 1978, Bronfenbrenner 1979) - an important number of the questions concerning family traditions touch upon the existence and significance of continued contacts during adulthood between the successive generations in families. In order to build a representative quantitative basis for the main project, where these questions are tackled through methods more qualitative in kind, the study here reported uses materials from a larger survey project. The present study aims merely to create an understanding of the extent and role of intergenerational contacts in the present life of Finnish urban men and women who are at different stages of their life.

2. FINNISH SOCIETY AS A RAPIDLY CHANGING CONTEXT

Many researchers who have discussed intergenerational contacts in the family have - while pointing out their significance as

offering over the life-course 'convoys' for mutual aid and social support (Lee 1979, Kahn & Antonucci 1980) - reviewed different strains and centrifugal as well as centripetal forces pressing upon these relationships (Bengtson & Black 1973, Hess & Waring 1978). Although many of the recent writers (Bengtson & Troll 1978, Allan 1979, Troll & Bengtson 1980) do not themselves agree with an inevitability of conflicts or a loosening of ties between parents and their children, they usually point out that many researchers have maintained that rapid transformations of a society necessarily create 'generation gaps'.

Investigations in present-day Finland concerning intergenerational contacts might carry a specific comparative interest. During only a human lifetime, that is during the six decades of its independence (1917) and most intensively in the 1960s, Finland has dramatically undergone that economic and social change from a predominantly agricultural and rural to a postindustrial and urbanized society which in most other European or even Nordic countries has taken place more slowly, over several generations.

It can be seen from Table 1 that despite an existing slow change towards urbanisation, Finland emerged from World War II as a still mainly agricultural society. Then a formidable leap took place, peaking in the decade 1960 and 1970. In the 1980s, the vast majority of the economically active population in Finland is employed in the industrial and even more in the 'tertiary', the service sectors of the economy. This means that now nearly two citizens out of three, and also a majority of the families with children under 18 years of age, live in urban municipalities of the country. On the other hand, only a minority of the residents among this urban population are natives of their own municipality. A massive internal migration has taken place - at the same time as a wave of emigration, predominantly to neighbouring Sweden, carried away considerable numbers of

the exceptionally large birth cohorts of the postwar 'baby boom' when they came of age. No wonder that it seems very relevant in Finland today to ask how far the ties between the successive generations in families are weakened or broken by occupational and geographical mobility.

TABLE 1. Transformation of the Finnish society during 1920 - 1980: size of population, economically active in different sectors, together with proportion of population living in urban municipalities (Sources. CSO 1979. Statistical Surveys No. 63, 351 and Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1982, Tables 29 and 7)

Year	Population	Economically active population in: agriculture & forestry	manufacturing & construction	services, commerce transport	Percentage and size of total population in urban municipalities
1920	3.2 mill.	70	12	11	16 % = 0.5 million
1930	3.5 mill.	66	13	13	21 % = 0.7 million
1940	3.7 mill.	60	16	17	27 % = 1.0 million
1950	4.0 mill.	46	27	26	32 % = 1.3 million
1960	4.5 mill.	36	30	34	38 % = 1.7 million
1970	4.6 mill.	20	34	44	51 % = 2.3 millions
1980	4.8 mill.	13	33	52	60 % = 2.9 millions

Another Finnish feature sharpens the question. Many of the abovementioned - mainly Anglo-Saxon - scholars have maintained that it is usually the woman/homemaker who maintains intergenerational contacts. In Finland women have a long tradition of working outside the home as well as within it, being employed on their small family farms and then increasingly in urban settings. Thus the percentage of women in the labour force

outside agriculture has steadily been above 40 (41 % in 1920, 46 % in 1975). But during recent decades the growth of the economy and especially of the service sectors has been paralleled by a conspicuous increase in the gainful employment of married women and mothers. Of all urban married women, 45 % were employed in 1960, but 65 % in 1975. In 1975 also 61 % of the mothers with children under school age and 75 % of those with the youngest child 7-15 years old were gainfully employed (Haavio-Mannila 1980, Jallinoja & Haavio-Mannila 1983). How do Finnish women and men take care of intergenerational contacts?

3. CHARACTER AND REPRESENTATIVITY OF THE SURVEY MATERIAL USED

The picture of intergenerational contacts in Finland presented here is based on the author's own selective secondary analyses of survey material collected at the end of 1981 by trained interviewers of the Central Statistical Office of Finland from a sample of 1000 persons randomly chosen from adults aged 25-66 years (born 1915 - 1956) and living in towns and cities founded before 1965. The total interview questionnaire used in the survey contained 542 questions of multiple-choice type and was originally planned by Associate Professor Elina Haavio-Mannila, with some co-workers at the Department of Sociology, University of Helsinki. They carry here the responsibility for the Finnish part (Haavio-Mannila & Kari 1979, Haavio-Mannila & Jallinoja 1980, Haavio-Mannila, Jallinoja & Strandell 1983) of the large, ongoing cross-national comparative project, "Changes in the Life Patterns of Families in Europe". That project involves 14 countries, and is co-ordinated by the European Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences (Vienna Centre 1982-82). The author of this paper has continuously participated in discussions on this cross-national project and some of the questions in the survey are results of her suggestions. In her own specific analyses, for which a selection of the survey

material was kindly made available, the author has, however, mainly had to use answers given to questions planned by others.

Because of a response rate of 75 % (which, according to Kitson et al. 1982, 972, seems to be better than many American response rates in the 1980s, especially on personal matters like the family) and of some minor modifications in the base of the sample, the final group of 744 persons interviewed in the survey is not completely comparable to the 1981 Finnish urban population of 25-64 years of age (size 1 507 179 persons, Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1982, Table 17). In the survey material women are in a still higher majority (55 % instead of 52 %) than in the corresponding population, the youngest age groups over-represented (proportion of the 25-34 years age group 39 % instead of 35 %) and older ages under-represented (proportion of 45-64 years old 38 % in the population, but proportion of 45-66 years old only 35 % in the survey). According to the Statistical Yearbook 1980, Table 29, the proportion of workers among the urban economically active population was in the 1975 56 % for men and 37 % for women - in the survey material the corresponding percentages are 46 and 28.

But although the groups of relatively older persons, of men and of workers are thus somewhat too small, the interview material can be considered to offer an unusually well collected and relatively accurate cross-sectional picture of the personal life and family experiences of the present Finnish urban adult population of an economically active age. That is the age period where the life-course is most varied and up to now least studied. It is also the age group which strongly influences the development of the other more thoroughly studied age groups: children, adolescents and youth and the retired. The survey material of 744 persons is also large enough to allow an analysis by both gender and age - although a certain caution is called for in the individual conclusions.

4. THE AGE PERIODS AND BIRTH COHORTS USED IN THIS STUDY

The intergenerational contacts of the interviewees in the survey will in the following be described according to age and gender groups as well as to the stages of family life they are experiencing. It is clear that so far as developing a comprehension of developmental processes over longer periods of the life-course is concerned, the cross-sectional method available here is insufficient in comparison with longitunal or cohort-sequential methods. Neither is chronological age alone as such a satisfactory variable in the study of adult lives. Still, the possibility of comparing different age periods - which can also from another angle simultaneously be studied as representative of different cohorts experiencing historical events at different ages - offers at least a basis from which to proceed further.

The total age period interviewed in the survey, 25-66 years of age at the end of 1981, roughly covers the most intensive time of work and family life in a modern society. The really young as well as the really old are left outside. For this study, this total time span is divided into five sub-periods of age, described in Table 2.

The two youngest age groups cover only five years each, partly because of the larger sizes of these groups, but more because of the supposed - and in the following confirmed - still ongoing transition from youth to adult roles in the later twenties. The youngest group is therefore also labelled 'young adult'; all the others are considered to belong to the traditional concept of 'middle age', which some sub'characteristics. The last age group, 'old middle', covers twelve years instead of ten - just for technical reasons. The under-representation of men in comparison with the adult population is also especially sharp in this group and calls therefore for extra caution.

TABLE 2. Age periods and birth cohorts used for analysis of intergenerational contacts among Finnish adult urban population, 1981

Group No.	Age in 1981	Type of age period	Years of birth	Type of cohort in Finland	Size of group	Gender % M	F
1.	25-29	'young adult'	1952-56	'postwar recovery'	158	48	52
2.	30-34	'young middle'	1947-51	'postwar baby boom'	133	47	53
3.	35-44	'middle'	1937-46	'wartime infancy'	190	47	53
4.	45-54	'mature middle'	1927-36	'wartime childhood'	134	50	50
5.	55-66	'old middle'	1915-26	'wartime youth'	129	34	66
Total	25-66	'working age'	1915-56	'two postwar generations'	744	45	55

If, on the other hand, these age groups are taken as representative of different birth cohorts in Finland, these oldest, born in 1915-26, were while young drawn into active participation in World War II, 1939-45, carried a heavy part in the post-war rebuilding of the country and were during the most rapid change of the 1960s reaching their 'mature middle' years. Their own birth years were during and after World War I, and the mean size of those yearly cohorts was originally considerable: around 79 000 (Source for all: Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1982, Table 33).

The second oldest group, the 'mature middle', born 1927-36, were originally much fewer (yearly mean about 72 500), as children of the economic recession. They remember World War II as childhood experiences and were during the 1960s well into their 'middle' years. The birth of the 'middle' group 3 (1937-46) took place around the difficult war years. Their conscious memories of the time are rather few, but the size of the cohorts is already larger than in the previous group (yearly about 76 500). This group experienced the rapid development of the 1960s during their 'young middle' years and they were probably often personally touched by the changes. This holds still more for the cohorts of 1947-51, the post-war 'baby boom' (yearly mean around 104 500), who just reached their adulthood during the 1960s. This 'young middle' group, like the already smaller birth cohorts (mean 91 500) of the 'young adults', can in many cases represent the ages of the children of the two oldest groups in the study. Thus the total survey can also be seen as covering two successive generations and the intergenerational contacts of an urban population can here be studied both in the upward and downward direction of the lineage.

5. SOME LIFE-COURSE EXPERIENCES OF URBAN MEN AND WOMEN IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

It is obvious that when one wants to investigate typical features of a certain age group by comparing it with other age groups of the above described type, it is very difficult to separate the observable age differences from differences in the specific experiences of different cohorts and thus the different effects of these experiences. In the following Table 3, some background experiences in relation to their childhood homes are compared for the age groups - as well as such features of their present work and family life as might have consequences for their use of time and direction of attention,

and thus presumably also for the contacts with the previous and next generations in the family.

TABLE 3. Some life-course experiences of men and women in different age groups of the Finnish urban population in 1981 (percentages)

Experiences	Total group		Age groups									
			25-29		30-34		35-44		45-54		55-66	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
N =	338	406	76	82	62	71	89	101	67	67	44	85
Childhood environments:												
- non urban	53	62	34	51	51	62	52	62	66	75	68	62
Left childhood home:												
- at the latest 20 years old	38	57	40	64	38	53	38	59	42	49	32	50
Economic activity:												
- now employed	83	72	78	71	94	82	97	90	85	86	48	36
Cohabitation:												
- at some time	26	24	49	52	34	39	18	15	17	8	5	6
- started at the latest 24 yrs old	14	13	41	44	18	21	3	1	3	0	0	0
First marriage:												
- at the latest 24 years old	45	62	39	55	47	66	49	70	51	60	34	56
Current marital status:												
- unmarried	21	17	43	35	31	10	14	14	4	9	7	14
- married	70	65	54	56	64	77	77	68	78	79	79	49
- divorced or separated	8	10	3	9	5	11	9	15	15	3	7	11
- widowed	2	8	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	9	7	26
Present family stage:												
- youngest 0-6 years	28	26	47	54	56	61	24	18	4	3	0	0
- youngest 7-12 "	12	11	5	4	13	15	20	24	18	13	0	0
- youngest 13-17 "	14	13	0	0	2	2	29	34	25	15	11	6
- youngest 18-23 "	11	10	0	0	0	0	3	9	36	37	21	7
- youngest over 24	9	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	18	54	66
- couple, no child	14	13	24	24	18	15	15	6	4	9	9	9
- never attached	11	10	24	18	11	7	9	9	3	5	5	11
Thinks customs & habits in childh. & present home:												
- are different	35	26	25	19	24	23	41	33	25	27	39	23
- partly different, partly similar	18	23	12	19	19	21	20	31	17	27	21	14
- are similar	20	27	13	18	22	35	14	19	32	31	22	37
- question irrelevant	33	24	50	44	35	21	25	17	26	15	18	26
Compared with childhood home, would like to bring up own children:												
- differently	40	33	34	38	40	36	50	34	36	31	36	26
- similarly	56	63	64	61	54	61	48	63	61	66	57	67
- ?	4	3	3	1	5	3	3	3	3	3	7	7

5.1. Character of childhood environment

When the present urban interviewees were questioned about the character of their childhood (age 7-15) environment, the answer for a definite majority (58 %) was: 'non-urban', thus implying a fairly general experience of a distance and difference. Even in the youngest age groups the proportions of 'non-urban' are considerable and with age they steadily increase, culminating at the 'mature middle' age with between 2/3 and 3/4 of the respondents. The differences between age groups can partly be explained as cohort (increasing urbanisation of the country, see Table 1), partly as age characteristics (more lifetime changes for mobility). An unmistakable gender difference can also be observed, with the women even more 'non-urban' in background than the men in all age groups - exept the (somewhat special) 'old middle' age group.

5.2. Age at moving out from the childhood home

About half (49 %) of the adult urban population had already at the age of 20 or earlier moved out of their childhood home, thus again shaping a distance to this home. In general, only in a minority of cases (men 42 %, women 40 %) was the reason for moving the setting up of a new home within a marriage or cohabitation relationship - more often the reason was 'work', 'study', or 'school'.

Here again a clear gender difference is observable for all the cohorts, with the women having left their childhood home early much more often than the men. This is increasingly true the younger the cohorts (among the 'young adults' of age 25-29 years only 5 % of the women but 20 % of the men still lived in their parental home). For the men, the proportion of having left home early hardly varied between cohorts - except for the lowest percentage of all, the 'old middle' group of men.

5.3. Present participation in economic activity

The total sample interviewed was in the official working age and more than three persons out of four (78 %) were gainfully employed at the time of the interview. The lowest proportions of employment can be seen at both ends of the age span, in the 'old middle' and the 'young adult' age groups; the employment was highest for both sexes in the 'middle' age group of 35-44 years. At all ages (except for the 'mature middle', where practically no difference exists) fewer women than men were employed, but as indicated earlier, the gender difference is internationally low. (In the case of men, those not employed were: retired 7 %, students, unemployed and disabled 3 % each and 1 % in military service; in the case of women: 12 % full-time homemakers, 9 % retired, 2 % disabled, students and unemployed 1 % each and 2 % mixed other situations.) Early retirement, unemployment, or illness thus seemed in a Finnish urban enviroment to be drawing the women of 'old middle' age away from gainful employment to a higher degree than homemaking, and caring for children could hinder the women of the 'young adult' and 'young middle' ages from working outside the home (68 % of the women with children aged 0-6 years were gainfully employed).

5.4. Experience of cohabitation

In Finland - as in many other industrialized countries (Spanier 1983) - unmarried cohabitation has during recent decades become a much used alternative to marriage as a form of living as a couple. The commonness of cohabitation is also corroborated by the survey, as 1/4 of all interviewees had themselves cohabited at some time. The comparative newness of the phenomenon in society (thus a cohort characteristic) is shown by its prevalence in the two youngest cohorts, the 'young adult' and 'young

middle', which also often started cohabiting at an early age. According to this survey (as well as several other studies) a majority (70 %) of the cases who had already finished their first unmarried cohabitation had ended it with marriage, a minority (28 %) with separation.

It is, on the other hand, notable that even in the oldest cohorts some personal experience of cohabitation is mentioned - most often after divorce or widowhood. The gender differences in respect to cohabitation are rather small. They indicate that women start cohabiting at a younger age than men, but that in the older age groups the frequency of cohabitation is higher for men than for women - tendencies that are similar for marriage, too.

5.5. Age at first marriage, and present marital status

As shown in Table 3, well around half of the total group interviewed had got married at the latest at the age of 24 years. In all the birth cohorts, however, this was clearly true for a smaller proportion of the men than of the women - even though the general intercohort variation was considerable for both sexes. The middle cohorts, those born in 1927-36 and 1937-46, show the highest percentages of early marriages, the former for men, the later for women; the figures for the youngest (born 1952-56) cohort are near the level of the oldest (born 1915-26). This U-shaped historical development corresponds to the official population statistics, according to which for both sexes the mean age for a first marriage grew continuously lower from the 1940s until around 1970, but began to rise steadily again. One obvious explanation for this has already been mentioned: the increasing practice of beginning with cohabitation as a kind of 'trial marriage'.

The differences in the official marital status between the age groups at the point of survey can naturally above all be seen as related to the lapse of time itself, but some cohort characteristics can also be observed. Thus despite the fact that the frequency of those still unmarried generally decreases steadily with each older age group (because of late first marriages), the proportion of unmarried rises for the oldest (born 1915-26) cohort - possible because of its character as 'wartime youth'. The higher proportion of unmarried men than women in the total survey group is mainly created by the well-known male tendency of marrying at somewhat higher age than women - in the older age groups the proportion of still unmarried is then higher for women.

As the category 'currently married' in table 3 includes first marriages as well as remarriages entered into after divorce (the proportion for all divorces was for men 10 %, for women 13 %) or after widowhood (of all men 3 %, of all women 10 %), the variations between age groups are here difficult to disentangle. As for gender differences, it seems that after reaching the 'middle' age group (35-44 years) the men have in the following decades of age through marriage and remarriage steadily kept the proportion of 'currently married' at the level of about 4/5 (77-79 %). The women again, having more often than men started their marriage at a younger age, have also more frequently than men met with divorce and widowhood already in the younger age groups (almost 10 % of the 'young adult' women lived currently as divorced) and have then - even according to the official population statistics - remarried somewhat less frequently than the men. (Thus 8 % of the women but only 1 % of the men in the total survey group lived currently as the sole provider for a child.) Among the women of the oldest age group (55-66 years) the proportion of 'currently married' has dropped to barely half of the group, with the percentages of those living as divorced or widowed being remarkably higher than in

the next eldest 'mature middle' (45-54 years) group. This can partly be a result of the rapidly increasing death risk for Finnish men around these ages, but partly also a result of early wartime widowhood and divorce.

5.C. Present stage of family life

For this study a variable indicating the person's present experience of family life was constructed, using as a background much of the discussion concerning analyses of family development and family life cycles (e.g. Duvall 1957, Aldous 1978, Hill & Mattessich 1979, Norton 1983). However, in order to avoid too many small subgroups, the variable used here in relation to the intergenerational contacts was formed mainly according to the development phase of the youngest child born (as this in many ways regulates the use of time and attention in the family) - in addition to distinguishing among the childless between those who had never lived in a couple relationship (marked 'never attached' in Table 3) and those who had married or cohabited.

Even this admittedly clumsy division leads to seven different stages of family experience. Already their distribution in Table 3 over the different age groups in the study clearly shows how varying the experience of family life and its stages can be for people of about the same age. Despite an obvious correlation, choronological age and the stages of family life must be treated as two different variables with certainly many different implications. Persons of all age groups, with the exception only of the oldest one (55-66 years), thus had youngest children of both preschool (0-6 years) and of school (7-12 years) ages, and teenagers (13-17 years) were reported as youngest children in all age groups other than the 'young adults' (25-29 years). The most diversified age period with a

simultaneous representation of all categories of here defined family life experiences was the second oldest 'mature middle' (45-54 years) - in the oldest, 'old middle' (55-66 years) age group, even the youngest children were in their teens and a majority of the group had already adult children.

The gender differences for the family life stages are rather small in the total group, as those differences easily seen in the subgroups - brought about by the different timing of family events - cancel each other out in the total group. Thus for the younger age groups the frequencies of 'never attached' are higher for men and the frequencies of children higher for women - finally in the older ages the proportions of 'childless' and 'never attached' are higher for women. Similarly, in the oldest age groups studied here relatively more women than men have already in their family life reached a stage where even the youngest child is adult, has surpassed 24 years of age.

5.7. Comparisons between childhood and present family

The survey questionnaire contained two questions for a personal comparison between the subject's own childhood and present life. In the first one she or he was asked to estimate the degree of similarity or dissimilarity of the customs and habits in the two homes experienced - excluding the obvious differences in physical environment and the advancement of technology. Five optional answers were offered, two of which stressed the similarity and two the dissimilarity side. From Table 3 it can be seen that the answers stressing dissimilarity reach for both sexes the highest percentages in the 'middle' age group (35-44 years) and the lowest in the youngest 'young adult' group (25-29 years), but that it is otherwise difficult to discern any regularity in the variation between age groups.

On the other hand, there does seem to be evidence of a difference between the two genders: in almost all the age groups (except the 'mature middle', where the difference is practically nonexistent) the men gave relatively more answers stressing dissimilarity between the customs and habits of the two homes. This was true despite the more frequent and earlier beginning practical detachment of women from their childhood homes.

A gender difference in the same direction as above can be seen in Table 3 in the answers to the second question asking for a comparison between childhood and present families. Here the interviewees were given a choice between four answers (two of them stressing similarity and two dissimilarity) to the question: "If you had children, would you want to bring them up the way you were yourself brought up?" Men as well as women gave here generally more answers stressing similarity than dissimilarity, but in all age groups except the youngest one the men stood relatively more often than the women on the side of dissimilarity. For men the highest proportion wanting a different upbringing for their own children came again in the 'middle' age group (35-44 years), but for the women this kind of opposition was highest in the youngest, 'young adult' group (25-29 years). From there the proportions of women stressing difference in upbringing decreased steadily with increasing age up to the eldest, 'old middle' group.

Short survey questions of an inflexible multiple choice type obviously cannot be expected to bring out many of the complex feelings that different individuals carry towards their childhood and present homes. The answers given, however, in any case indicate that the attitudes to the parental home and its upbringing were not extremely alienated in any age group - and that the feelings of dissimilarity were generally somewhat less accentuated for women, despite women in fact having more frequently shaped longer and earlier distances from their childhood homes.

6. THE PERSONAL INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACTS IN ADULTHOOD

As the larger framework of the project concerns the changing roles of traditions and customs in family life, this particular study tries to elucidate how far intergenerational family contacts with some possibilities of reciprocal developmental effects continue as a part of the present interactional reality of the Finnish urban adults. Intergenerational contacts are here understood as the average frequency of personal meetings (telephone or mail are not counted) on the one hand with the previous generations of parents and grandparents, and on the other hand with the next generation, that is with one's own adult children who have left the parental household.

6.1. Existing possibilities for intergenerational contacts at different ages.

At first it has to be examined how far there existed for the different age groups of the survey sample any real possibilities for intergenerational contacts, that is: how far the interviewees had parents or grandparents still alive and how far they had adult children who had left home. From Table 4 it can be seen (included among the 'dead' are here also the few cases where the questions otherwise were irrelevant) that because of the lengthened life-span in the present society and the well-known gender difference in mortality (the mean expectation of life for a boy born in 1921-30 was 51 years, for the girl 55 years, the corresponding expectations for those born in 1951-55 were 63 years for a boy and 70 years for a girl, Statistical Yearbook of Finland 1980, Table 53) nearly half (44 %) of the total group of urban adults of 'working age' still had their fathers alive. Many more, about two thirds 68 %), had their mother alive and even some of the paternal or maternal grandparents were a living reality for about every

TABLE 4. Present frequency of meeting other generations in family for Finnish urban men and women 1981 (percentages of age groups) ("often" = at least weekly or 31 days a year, "fairly often" = monthly or at least a few times yearly)

Subject	Total group		Age groups									
			25-29		30-34		35-44		45-54		55-66	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
	338	406	76	82	62	71	89	101	67	67	44	85
Meets own father:												
- often	25	20	58	30	29	31	19	24	9	9	0	2
- fairly often	21	20	18	33	37	30	35	22	7	10	0	2
- hardly ever	2	2	0	3	5	4	1	2	3	0	2	0
f. dead, q. irrelevant	52	58	24	34	29	35	45	52	81	81	98	96
Meets own mother:												
- often	38	35	70	51	47	47	33	42	25	33	5	6
- fairly often	31	29	25	34	43	48	46	35	26	27	5	5
- hardly ever	1	2	0	3	3	1	1	2	0	0	2	1
m. dead, q. irrelevant	30	34	5	12	7	4	20	21	49	40	88	88
Meets paternal granparents:												
- often	1	1	3	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
- fairly often	9	6	20	20	13	6	5	4	1	1	0	1
- hardly ever	3	5	4	10	7	6	1	4	1	2	2	1
gps. dead, q. irrelevant	87	88	73	68	78	84	94	92	98	97	98	98
Meets maternal grandparents												
- often	1	1	5	5	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
- fairly often	8	8	22	18	12	17	0	5	3	0	0	1
- hardly ever	3	4	6	9	5	1	0	2	0	3	2	1
gps. dead, q irrelevant	88	87	67	68	83	82	100	92	95	97	98	98
Meets adult son:												
- often	13	12	..	..	..	..	2	4	30	21	46	35
- fairly often	3	5	..	..	..	..	1	2	6	9	14	14
- hardly ever	2	0	..	..	..	..	1	0	6	1	2	0
q. irrelevant	82	83	100	100	100	100	96	94	58	69	38	51
Meets adult daughter:												
- often	9	17	..	..	..	..	5	7	14	29	34	49
- fairly often	7	5	..	..	..	..	2	3	11	12	32	9
- hardly ever	4	1	..	..	..	..	1	1	8	3	5	0
q. irrelevant	80	77	100	100	100	100	92	89	67	56	29	42
Shares household with:												
- parental generation	8	3	16	7	10	3	5	3	6	2	2	1
- grandpar. generation	0	0										
- childr. generation	60	62	51	57	64	79	73	80	67	66	30	28
- grandchildr. gener.	1	2	..	..	..	..	1	0	1	1	2	7
Tends to meet(= % of those possible):												
- father "often"	52	48	76	46	41	48	35	50	47	47	(0)	(50)
- mother "often"	54	53	74	58	51	49	41	54	49	55	(42)	(50)
- pat. grandpar. at least "fairly often"	77	58	85	59	68	63	..	..	..	..	..	..
- mat. grandpar. at least "fairly often"	75	70	81	72	71	94	..	..	..	..	..	..
- adult son "often"	72	71	..	..	..	..	(50)	(67)	72	67	74	71
- adult daughter "often"	45	74	..	..	..	..	(62)	(64)	42	66	48	84

eighth (12-13 %) of the interviewees. It is difficult to say whether it merely depends on chance, or whether it has something to do with the previously noted differences in background between the genders, but it seems that the women had lost their fathers especially, perhaps also their mothers, in somewhat higher proportion and at somewhat earlier ages than had the men.

As for the different age groups, the majority of those in the three 'young' and 'middle' ones (25-44 years) had their fathers living; for those in the 'mature middle' the proportion had dropped to a fifth (19 %), but even in the oldest group of the survey there were a few percent with their fathers alive. The mothers were alive for the majority in all the age groups except the oldest one; even there the proportion was around an eighth (12 %). In the case of the paternal and maternal grandparents (the survey had separate questions for them), in both the 'young' groups (ages 25-34 years) about 20-30 % could speak of an existing grandparent in either case; from the 'middle' age up to the oldest there were still scattered cases.

Speaking of the next generation, adult children having already moved out of the parental home were on average a reality for about a fifth of the total group interviewed. The admittedly small differences, indicating that a larger proportion (21 %) of the interviewees mentioned adult daughters than sons (17 %) who had already left home, goes in same direction as the earlier finding that the women in the interviewee generation themselves had left their childhood home earlier than the men. This difference between sons and daughters was also corroborated within almost all of the age groups where meeting adult children were mentioned. Among the different ages, this meeting was - quite naturally - concentrated in the 'mature middle' and 'old middle' groups (the 45-66 years old), although already in the 'middle' (35-44 years) age group there were some 5-10 %

whose sons or daughters had already moved out of the home. In this 'middle' age group thus the questions both about meeting grandparents and about their own adult children were relevant for only a few cases; so the possibilities for intergenerational contacts were for this age period mainly restricted to one, the parental generation. For the people in all the other age periods of the sample, in the two younger as well as in the two older, questions concerning contacts with two different generations were relevant to a considerable degree.

6.2. Actual frequency of contact at different ages with parents, grandparents and adult children

In the survey, the actual question measuring contacts with kin began with a common introduction: "Could you now tell me how often you nowadays meet the following relatives?" and continued then with list of different relatives. The answers were already grouped by the professional interviewers into the following finely divided list (the combinations used for Table 4 are given on the right):

1) daily or almost daily	
2) weekly or about 31-90 days/year	1+2 = meets "often"
3) monthly or about 8-30 days/year	
4) a few times yearly	3+4 = meets "fairly often"
5) sometimes, very infrequently	
6) never	5+6 = meets "hardly ever"
7) said relative was dead	
8) question irrelevant	7+8 = "dead, irrelevant"

It is deplorable that in the construction of the long survey questionnaire, with many aims and themes, questions concerning the subject's present geographical distance from the different relatives, as well as questions on parents-in-law, had purely

accidentally been left out. However, as can be seen from the list above, the gradations concerning the amount of interaction do also take into account the overcoming of longer distances by the possibility of spending longer periods with some relative, e.g. during vacations. In the case of meeting their father and mother, it naturally in many cases (but certainly not always) occurred simultaneuously for those persons who had both parents alive - this, however, is not taken into account separately here.

According to Table 4, in the total adult group interviewed the meeting of one's father or mother was on average even more frequently (22 % and 37 %) reported to occur "often" (= corresponding to at least weekly) than meeting them "fairly often" (= monthly or at least a few times yearly - 20 % and 30 %); only 1-2 % of the interviewees met their parents "hardly ever". This rather intensive interaction with the parental generation can in Table 4 also be observed for each of the age periods analysed, diminishing only with the diminishing real possibilities. The small proportions of meeting "hardly ever" do not increase or decrease with age groups or cohorts.

At least for the intergenerational contacts of direct family lineage which are the concern of this study, there seems to be rather little support in this population for the saying that contacts with kin are "women's business". The youngest males in particular, those in the 'young adult' age (25-29 years) met their fathers as well as their mothers "often" to a considerable higher degree than did the females of the same age. Even in the next age group, the 'young middle' (30-34 years), the percentage of both genders meeting their father or mother "often" were about in balance. For the oldest age groups there is some indication that the change of frequencies from "often" to "fairly often" was somewhat stronger for the males than the females, but even in the oldest age group the proportions of "hardly ever" cannot be said to have increased.

In the case of the parental and the maternal grandparents (the question wording was for each of them: the couple member most often seen"), the figures in Table 4 are rather similar for both categories of grandparents: the highest frequency category for contacts, "often", scarcely came up in the average for the total group surveyed, but also the lowest frequency, "hardly ever", was seldom reported. The interviewees most often answered that they saw each of the grandparents in question "fairly often" (= monthly or a few times a year). For about one in four (22-27 %) of the 'young adults' (25-29 years), for more than one in ten (10-17 %) in the 'young middle' age (30-34 years) and still for one in twenty (around 5 %) of the 'middle age' (35-44 years), a regular, if not very frequent (= often" + "fairly often") interaction with at least one grandparent was a part of their social network. It is interesting to note that, as in the case of parents, the adult males interviewed did not by any means show any conspicuously lower frequencies of meeting their grandparents than the females of the same age; in several cases they reported even somewhat higher frequency.

As for meeting the adult children already "outside the nest", the category of most dense interaction, "often", clearly was most frequently reported - in the total group average as well as separately for all the three age periods where this question had some relevance. There were, however, in each age group in question also a few percentages of "hardly ever" answers given. As these figures almost every time were higher for the male than for the female parents, at least some of them can be supposed to represent children alienated from the father through processes of divorce (in Finland, as in many other countries, the custody of children in divorce has up to now usually been given to the mother).

Meeting adult children "often" or "fairly often" was a part of the interactional social network for already some (3-10 %) of those in the 'middle' age (35-44 years), for a considerable

number (25-40 %) of the 'mature middle' (45-54 years) group, and for a majority (55-66 %) of the 'old middle' group. An interesting relational gender difference seems to be indicated by the observation that in the two most relevant age groups the percentages for meeting adult sons "often" were considerably higher for the men than for the women of the same age, and that again for meeting adult daughters "often" the percentages for the women were in all three age groups higher than the corresponding ones for men. This could indicate a tendency for a specific "same-sex" closeness in the relation to adult children, but this claim (not infrequently mentioned in the literature, mostly concerning women) certainly needs more verification, especially as it is not directly shown in the contacts with subject's parents.

6.3. Frequencies of intergenerational contacts as related to the corresponding possibilities

Above, the frequency of intergenerational contacts has been discussed in relation to all the interviewees in each age group - in order to catch the average total actuality of these contacts in the social networks of each age period. However, in order to compare different ages or genders more adequately, according to their tendency or willingness to have close interaction with different relatives, the percentages of the answer category "often" are in Table 4 also for each relative and each group counted in relation to the actual possibilities for interaction or relevance of the question, that is in relation to which degree each group actually had such relatives. (In the table the mark .. is used for total irrelevance of the question or for too few cases to be used as bases for percentages.)

Firstly, looking at the tendency of meeting one's own parents

"often", it can be seen that the large differences between meeting one's father or mother that are due to the mothers' greater longevity have now disappeared. Still, for both genders there can be observed a tendency to give "often" answers more frequently for meeting mothers than for fathers. For women this was more pronounced, and was repeated in each relevant age period - thus giving support to the "same-sex closeness" observed above in the case of relations with adult children. But in case of men, only the youngest, the 'young adult' (25-29 years) gave slightly more frequently answers in the category "often" for meeting their living fathers than for their living mothers; in all the other age groups the men, like the women, met their mothers "often" more frequently than they met their fathers. This again would speak for (an also sometimes pronounced claim) a closer attachment to the mother than to the father in the case of adult children of both genders. (Here one is again reminded of the possible effect of divorce alienating the children from their fathers.)

Anotner interesting gender difference is that the Finnish men, especially the younger ones, seemed to meet their parents more frequently "often" than the women of the same age - only in the 'middle' (35-44 years) and the 'mature middle' (45-54 years) age groups, where the fathers and mothers had reached ages where some care could be needed, were the proportions of women reporting "often" higher than those of men. For both genders there can also be observed in the relative frequency of the "often" answers a slight tendency to a U-shaped age development, with the lowest points around the 'young middle' and 'middle' ages.

When speaking about contacts with the grandparents, the relevant age periods are restricted to the youngest ones in the study, and because of the small number of the "often" answers, the categories "often" and "fairly often" are combined in the

table. There is some indication that the women had a tendency to maintain more contacts with their living maternal than paternal grandparents, which could fit with "same-sex closeness". However, only the youngest men had the tendency to report contacts with their paternal grandparents more frequently than with their maternal grandparents, and the general reporting of contacts with grandparents was in three comparisons out of four even higher for men than for women. As for age periods, the youngest group, 'young adults' (25-29 years) in most cases reported more contacts with living grandparents than the 'young middle' (30-34 years) group did.

The tendency of both the 'mature middle' (45-54 years) and the 'old middle' (55-66 years) age groups to meet their adult children "often" was similarly strong in the cases where the children had already left home. Perhaps some indication of a "same-sex closeness" can be seen in that the men in both of these age groups reported meeting their sons "often" more frequently than meeting their adult daughters. Similarly, in both of the age groups, the men reported meeting their sons "often" more frequently than the women of the same group met their sons and on the other hand the women reported more frequently meeting their daughters "often" compared with the men of corresponding age. This difference was more pronounced in the case of meeting daughters than sons.

6.4. Intergenerational contacts in the same household

Table 4 finally shows that the rather frequent (in relation to the mobility and distances in Finland) intergenerational contacts of the Finnish adult sample interviewed were only to a very low degree created by the generations living together in the same household. The sharing of the household with representatives of another generation was usual only in the case of the

next generation, one's own children (mainly of minor age). A majority of the interviewees (on the average nearly two-thirds) shared a household with the children's generation, with the highest frequencies (over three-quarters) in the 'middle' age (35-44 years) and the lowest (still nearly a third) in the oldest group (55-66 years). There were, however, in even the youngest age groups, especially males who did not live in the same household with their children.

Living in the same household with the representative of the parental generation (here even parents-in-law were counted) was reported by only a few percentages in each age group (on average 5 %), more by the men than by the women. The highest frequencies (even they were low compared with the frequency of contacts otherwise) were reported by males in the youngest age groups, who had not yet left the parental home.

Nobody in the total group interviewed reported living in the same household with some representative of the grandparental generation. In the oldest age groups there were some cases who had grandchildren living in their household.

6.5. Typical intergenerational contacts for each age period

On the basis of averages from Table 4, it is possible to create for each age period in the survey sample a typical picture of the combinations of its intergenerational contacts. As such a picture is roughly drawn below, it must simultaneously be kept in mind how far such a general picture always stands from the living individual cases, with their immensely varying combinations and exceptions.

The 'young adult' age (25-29). Although already nine out of ten in this group had moved out of their childhood home, the most

common intergenerational interaction was with the previous generation, the parents: around 90 % met their mothers and 71 % their fathers "fairly often" or "often" (respectively 60 % and 44 % met at least weekly = "often"). Around 25 % of the group were also meeting the second preceding generation, a grandparent, "fairly often" or "often". Interaction with the next, the new generation, in the form of sharing everyday life with their own (mostly small) children in the same household was a reality for not yet more than roughly half of the young urban adults. About half of those childless were still totally unattached, the other half had at least tried to live as a couple, unmarried or married. Those in this already undoubtedly adult group were, in their study, work and personal life, still to a great degree living in a transitional period (a comparable finding is recently reported from Norway, Featherman & Sörensen 1983).

The 'young middle' age (30-34 years). Meeting the parental generation at least "fairly often" was still an important part of the interactional network for the vast majority of this group (over 90 % met mothers, over 60 % fathers) but the frequency of the daily or weekly (= "often") contacts with that generation was now lower, though still considerable (about 47 % and 30 % respectively). All but 5 % no longer shared household with the parental generation. Their own household included the next generation, children, for about three-quarters (72 %) of the age group, and the interactional contacts in this direction could occasionally reach even teenagers, although most of the families still included pre-schoolers. On the other side, even the grandparental generation was still a reality, as at least 15 % of the group met some grandparent "fairly often" or "often". The fact, that the proportion of those 'never attached' was below 10 % could add to the impression of the age period as one of "settling down" - if it were not, on the other hand, that the proportions of those divorced or widowed were also around the same size. In any case, it seems quite justified and

useful that this and the previous 'young' age group are analysed separately, although they both cover only five years of age instead of ten - there is undoubtedly a great difference between these ages generally.

The 'middle' age (35-44 years). Among the intergenerational contacts of this 'middle' group, the interaction with the next generation, their own children, had a central place, as on average 80 % had children in the same household. This could in this case mean daily interaction with a toddler or preschooler, as well as with somebody over twenty. In addition, about 6 % of the group also met "fairly often" or "often" adult children who had already left home. Rather regular contacts with the previous generation were, however, also a reality for the 'middle' age, as a majority (78 %) met their mothers and half (50 %) their fathers at least "fairly often" (the now respectively decreased 37 % and 21 % "often" included). A few percent of those in the 'middle' age even had "fairly often" contacts with the grandparental generation still.

The 'mature middle' age (45-54 years). Even if somewhat less than in the previous age group, the intergenerational contacts of this age were to a rather high degree concentrated on daily interaction with the next generation. Still about two-thirds of the age group reported that they shared a household with their children, in most cases no longer with such young ones. In addition, a third of the age group reported meeting an adult son at least "fairly often", another third of the group correspondingly meeting an adult daughter. (These several reports concerning contacts with the children's generation overlap in many cases - but not always, as about 90 % of the age group had children). But in addition, over half of those in the "mature middle" age also had regular contacts with the previous generation, as still about 55 % reported seeing their mothers at

least "fairly often". Because of deaths, those meeting their fathers were now much fewer, less than 20 %.

The 'old middle' age (55-66 years). In this age period the inter-generational contacts of the majority of the group were mainly restricted to the next generation (only around 10 % met their mother at least "fairly often", barely 1 % their father). At the same time these contacts were now in most cases not part of the daily life, as only 30 % shared a household with their children but around 54 % met at least "fairly often" a "flown from the nest" adult son, 62 % an adult daughter. A considerable number (around 40 %) of the age group even met these adult children "often", that is at least weekly.

7. INTERGENERATIONAL CONTACTS AND OTHER VARIABLES

The frequency of intergenerational contacts among urban adults in Finland has above mainly been discussed in relation to age group/birth cohort and gender variables. As was shown in Table 3, the important kinds of life experiences that are represented by the present family stage were in the sample to some degree independent from age. In Table 5 it is shown to which degree the tendency (=frequency as related to possibilities) to meet their own father or mother "often" in the survey varied according to the present stage of family life.

Both the men and the women in whose families the youngest child was under school age (0-6 years) reported meeting fathers as well as mothers "often" comparatively frequently - more frequently than if even the youngest child had already reached older ages. (The figures for "often" were, however, again higher when the children had almost reached adulthood and the oldest generation possibly needed special help or care.) A finding that the existence of small children in a family tends

to draw successive generations nearer each other, both through a common interest and for help in child care, has been noted in many other contexts (e.g. Leigh 1982). Differential effects for intergenerational contacts when there is a couple tie as against a child tie can possible be seen when comparing the rather low figures for meeting parents "often" in Table 5 for those childless interviewees (especially the women) who had experience of living in a couple relationship with the considerable higher frequencies of "often" for those similarly childless who had up to now been totally unattached.

TABLE 5. Tendency (= in % of living parents) to meet parents "often" for men and women at different stages of family life (= at least weekly)

Subject meets "often"	Family stages: Youngest child 0-6 yrs.		Youngest child 7-12 yrs.		Youngest child 13-17 yrs.		Youngest child 18-23 yrs.		Youngest child over 24		Couple, no child		Unattached, no child	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
- living father	55	56	48	34	27	62	65	(50)	(33)	(57)	45	23	78	50
- living mother	58	59	39	46	37	48	62	61	33	67	43	38	86	55

The earlier observation that the Finnish urban men - as compared with women in a corresponding group - can hardly be said to meet their parents less frequently is in this analysis of family stages again repeated. Only in the group where the youngest children were teenagers (13-17 years) were the male frequencies of "often" considerably lower than the female ones. In many cases the difference went even in the opposite direction.

For the stages of family life as a whole, in relation to the contacts with one's own parents, it is possible to agree with Leigh (1982) in that neither a continuous increase nor a

continuous decrease is observable in the frequency of interaction over the family life span - at least not in a large cross-sectional survey over general population samples.

In this study there has also been an attempt to analyze how far the frequency of intergenerational contact could be said to vary with different other of variables, both sociological and psychological in kind, e.g. those presented above in Table 5. Any single, simple, significant co-variations have not been possible to observe - as the variations in age, gender and real possibilities for contact would simultaneuously have to be taken into account. Above all, however, the pure phenomenon of frequency of contacts - as studied here in variations over the total population - tells almost nothing about the content nor the emotional quality and meaning of the contacts for the different participants.

As for content, specific questions on mutual aid and caregiving to relatives were originally included in the questionnaire of the study. Haavio-Mannila (1983), in a recent analysis, shows to which degree in the welfare state of today such functions as full-time care of the elderly or the day-care of children are transferred from families to specialized agencies. But she also points out that even today, practical as well as psychological aid is flowing in both directions through contacts between different kinds of kin.

Helping is, however, only one aspect of many in the very complex intergenerational relations in individual lives and inside families. As, for example, Hess & Waring (1978, 258) well emphasize, it is not at all clear that contacts can be equated with emotional closeness or altogether positive feelings: "Visiting patterns and intergenerational exchanges, as with all types of system transaction, both unite and separate; that is, the exchange between units is a form of connecting, but at the

same time, an acknowledgement of the boundaries that exist between the two".

In order to understand more of this complexity - the different factors and changes associated with intergenerational relations - research using more qualitative and flexible methods and a more longitudinal grasp than here is clearly needed. However, the simple fact, verified in even this short study, that personal contacts over the generational boundaries in families do continue in a rapidly changing and mobile society as a whole as well as through the lives of individuals and families, forms a very important starting point. These relations themselves can be expected to develop and change further and they might be for the participants significant instruments for mutual socialization and transmission in adult age.

8. CONCLUSION

In this study, using material from a large survey on the present urban adult population in Finland, personal contacts between successive generations in the family were found to continue as a regular part of the social network of most adults of all ages - even against the background of the rapid transformation of the Finnish society from an agricultural to a post-industrial one, and the resulting great mobility and sudden urbanization during a period of only one human lifespan.

Despite the fact that a majority of the interviewees had spent their childhood in a different, non-urban environment and that half of them had already left their childhood home before 21 years of age and despite their present time and attention being drawn in many other directions (three-quarters of the group were gainfully employed, two-thirds were currently married, a

majority of the group shared a household with children), there were only one-two percent of the interviewees who "hardly ever" (= very infrequently or never) met their father or mother, their adult son or daughter. Even in the case of grandparents, the percentage of "hardly ever" were not much higher.

Only the age-bound variation in real possibilities (fathers or mothers alive or dead, existence or non-existence of adult children who had already left home) seemed to create larger differences in the frequencies of intergenerational contacts between the 'young adult' (25-29 years), the 'young middle' (30-34 years), the 'middle' (35-44 years), the 'mature middle' (45-54 years) and the 'old middle' (55-66 years) ages. A simple general periodization of the middle part of life is not to be observed (compare Lehr 1978). In almost all groups, the answer category "often" (= corresponding to "at least weekly") was even more frequent than the next category "fairly often" (= corresponding to "monthly" or "a few times a year") as given to questions about how often a parent or an adult child was met. Sharing a household with a parent occurred so infrequently that this contributed very little to the generally high level of contact.

The frequency of contact with their parents as reported by the youngest 'young adult' group corresponded rather well with the reports of the two oldest age groups (who could well fit as their parents) about their contacts with their "out of nest" children, a generational circle thus being closed inside the study.

Over age groups, the family stage currently experienced by the interviewees seemed to affect the frequency of contacts, in that both men and women whose youngest child was under school age reported more frequent contacts with their own now living parents than those whose families had reached later stages. On

the other hand, the totally unattached childless reported more frequent contacts with their parents than those childless whose life was occupied by a couple relationship.

Gender differences can here draw a special interest, in that the female interviewees even more seldom than the males had an urban childhood; they had even more often left their childhood home early; they were (especially in the middle age groups) to nearly the same degree as the males gainfully employed; and because they (like women in many other societies) on average entered - and ended - many of the family life stages earlier than the men of comparable age. Despite all this, the variations between different age groups in the frequency of intergenerational contacts seemed to be lower in the case of women than of men: for women the contacts became rather more frequent with increasing age. They were more often than men in charge of the direct care or help for parents. The intergenerational contacts of men seemed to have more of a U-shape: the youngest males had high frequencies of contacts with their parents (even higher than the corresponding females); these contacts became less frequent towards the middle age groups and then the frequencies rose again in the oldest groups. On the basis of this study it is difficult to discern here age effects from possible cohort effects. It is only interesting to note that the same male middle age groups also most stressed the differencies between their childhood and present home and upbringing. Among women, the youngest ones most stressed differences in upbringing.

As a whole, however, the general frequency of intergenerational contacts was by no means conspicuously lower for men than for women, sometimes even higher. The different factors creating this "equality" cannot here be cleared up.

As for the gender differences among the counterparts of the

contacts, it seems that even in proportion to the number of parents alive, contacts with mothers were somewhat more frequent than those with fathers. It has been presumed (but not yet verified) that a part of this relative alienation could be created by divorce, where the mother up to now has usually got the custody of the children - with the subsequent problems for her, but also with continuing contacts. There are also in the material some indications of a certain "same-sex closeness" in adult ages, that is the men having relatively more frequent contact with their fathers or sons and women with their mothers and daughters.

This tendency to a more frequent contact with their own sex (which may strengthen old sex role stereotypes, mediate practical help or offer models for a new kind of independence or equality) seems to be more pronounced in the case of mothers and daughters and to separate more daughters and fathers from each other. The slight tendency ought not, however, to be too much emphasized against the generally high level of intergenerational contacts in the Finnish urban population interviewed in the survey.

The main conclusion of this study must be that the content, meaning and function as instruments of mutual socialization as well as the emotional climate of the intergenerational contacts of adult persons have to be studied through more qualitative methods than a large representative survey can offer.

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